

**Make Over Your Front Yard—Three Winning Plans**

The Magazine of Western Living

# Sunset

## Great Parks, No Crowds

**Our Guide to the Most  
Appealing, Least  
Visited National Parks**

**Seven Drives Into  
Southern California  
Farm Country**

**Fresh Berry Bounty:  
Muffins, Waffles,  
Cobbler, and Cake**

**A Memorable  
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JULY 1995



It's a lot harder to believe that you're in Washington state, only 120 miles from Seattle and almost as close to Vancouver, British Columbia.

The scope and diversity of this 504,781-acre park are mind-boggling. It's home to 1,700 species of plants, 207 species of birds, 26 species of fish, and 85 species of mammals, grizzly bears and cougars among them. Within the park's boundaries are 318 glaciers (half of all the glaciers in the lower 48 states). Yet you can cover the park by car from west to east and back again in one long day.

#### ◆HOW TO GET THERE

**North Cascades Highway** (State 20) angles east from Interstate 5 at Burlington and runs about 4 miles through commercial districts and residential areas before it reaches Sedro Woolley and the park headquarters, at 2105 State Route 20 (open 8 to 4:30 daily through summer). Here you can get maps and pamphlets, many of them free, covering day-hikes in the area, longer trails, wildlife, and natural history. From the park headquarters, you can drive 130 miles through the deep, green Skagit River Valley, up into the High Cascades, over Washington Pass (elevation 5,477 feet), then down into the town of Winthrop on the desert side of the range. The route is delightfully short on concessions, so pack a lunch and make sure the gas tank is full.

#### ◆OFF-HIGHWAY HIKES

The park is a hiker's paradise, with treks to match anyone's energy level. The trails are so empty that you'll welcome the sight of another hiker. **Diablo Lake Trail** begins at milepost 128 as you head east on North Cascades Highway. This 3.8-mile (one way) trail meanders through stands of old-growth conifers, then climbs to a bluff that looks down on glacier-fed Diablo Lake and out to the jagged peaks that ring it. The lake is tinted deep jade green by glacial till.

**Happy Creek Forest Boardwalk Trail**, at milepost 134.5, loops 1/3 mile along the creek and up through ancient woods. This little-used trail is dotted with interpretive signs that explain the ecology of ancient forests. It's excellent for families with a broad range of ages because it's wheelchair and stroller friendly.

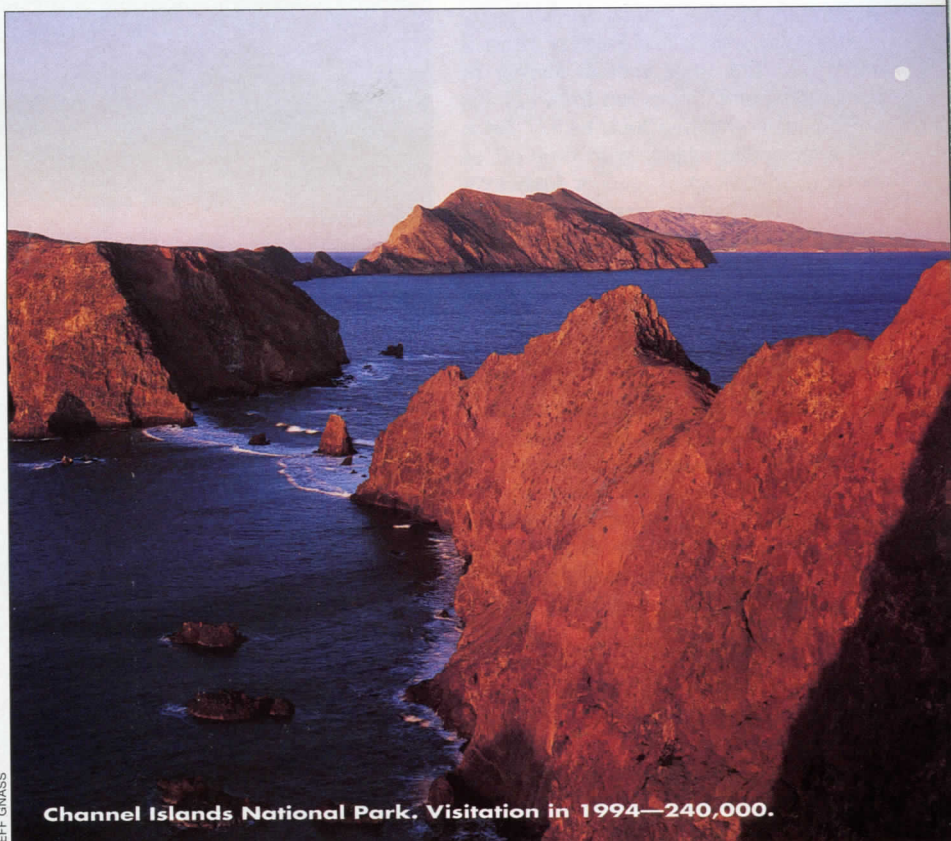
**East Bank Trail**, at milepost 138, leads all the way to Canada, but you can also hike it 0.3 mile (one way) to Ruby Creek or 3.3 miles to Ross Lake. The peaks around Ross Lake sparkle with side glaciers, and the deep lake itself is peacock blue, uncolored by glacial till. As on all the forest walks in the park, thick mosses

coat tree trunks and dangle from limbs, ferns carpet the ground, and sunlight shines down in long shafts through the giant firs, cedars, and hemlocks. The rich immensity of nature, the pungent forest fragrances, and the ethereal stillness on these trails will cause you to ponder the

beauty of this lonely park.

*North Cascades National Park is in northern Washington, near the Canadian border, about 50 miles east of Interstate 5 at Burlington. For more information, call (360) 856-5700.*

—Steven R. Lorton



JEFF GNASS

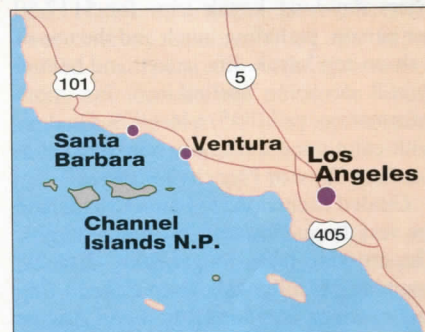
Channel Islands National Park. Visitation in 1994—240,000.

## Channel Islands National Park

Five islands 90 minutes from urban Southern California feel a million miles away

Take a look at a map of Southern California. You'll probably notice two things: the dramatic way the coast shifts from a north-south orientation to a west-east direction, and a cluster of islands that look as though they've made a break from the mainland madness and are headed out to sea.

Those are the Channel Islands, and you should follow their lead. The islands, five of which are administered as Channel Islands National Park, offer your best chance to experience 250,000 acres of Southern California in a pure and natural state. You can paddle a kayak into sea caves, snorkel in pure waters teeming with wildlife, or explore some of the finest tidepools anywhere. The wealth of en-



demical animal and plant species, including the island fox and the Santa Cruz Island ironwood tree, has led many biologists to describe these oceanic extensions of the Santa Monica Mountains as a North American Galápagos.

Veiled in mists, the islands may seem distant, but Anacapa is just 11 miles offshore—90 minutes by boat from Ventura Harbor and you arrive in a separate world. Any mainland park of such quality, so close to a populated area, would be swamped by visitors and lose the very



qualities that made it special. It all goes to show the value of a good moat.

#### ◆DOING THE ISLANDS IN A DAY

Although you can camp on Anacapa, Santa Rosa, San Miguel, and Santa Barbara, and limited lodging is available on Santa Cruz, the best way to start your exploration of the Channel Islands is by taking a day trip. Island Packers offers a variety of trips from Ventura Harbor to **Anacapa Island**. Prices run from \$21 for a 3½-hour no-landing look to \$37 for a full day on the island, with drop-off at either East Anacapa Island or Frenchy's Cove. Island Packers contracts with the Nature Conservancy to bring people to **Santa Cruz Island** for the day. Cost is \$49. For reservations or information about trips to either island, call (805) 642-1393.

#### ◆WHAT TO DO

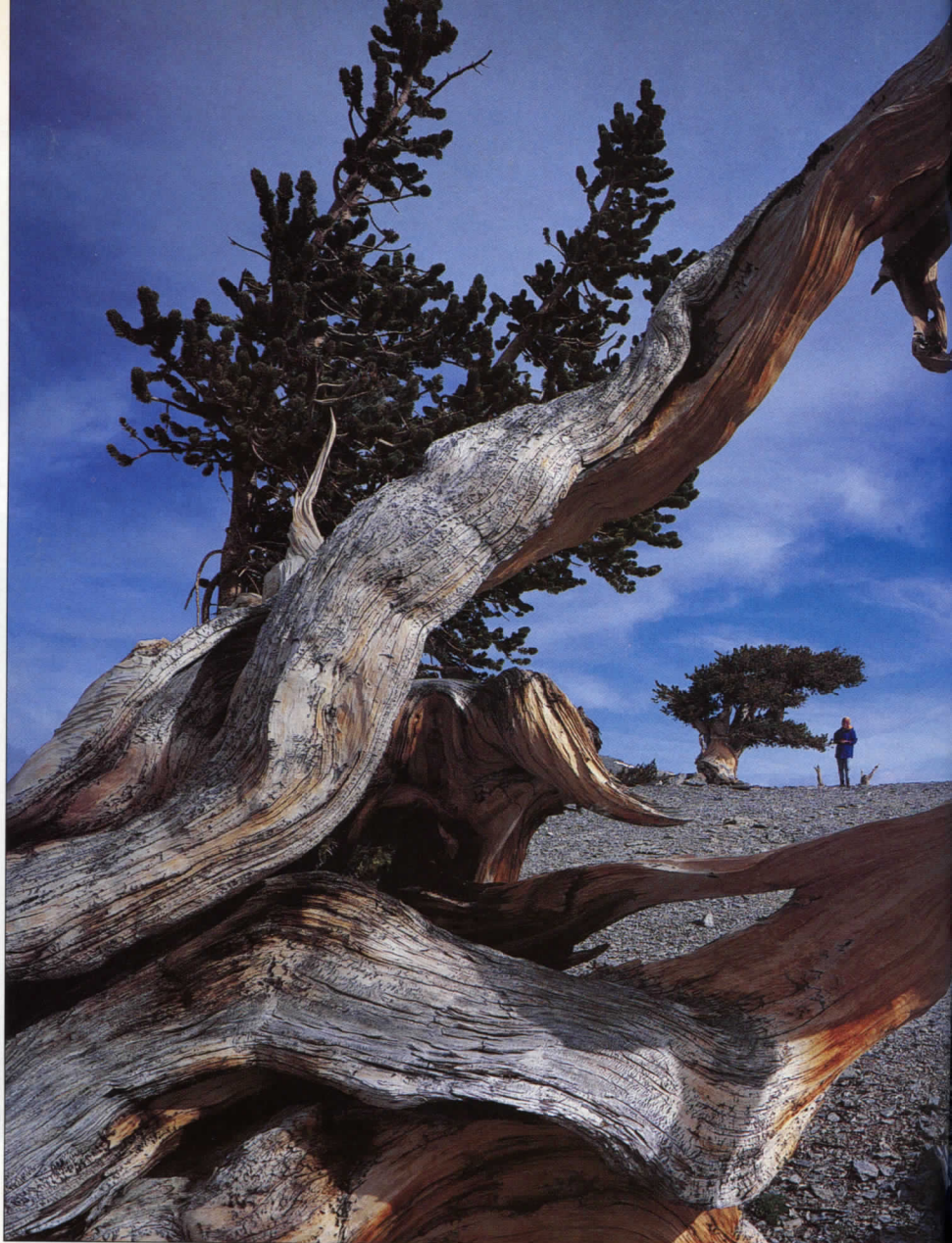
Boats dock at **Landing Cove** on East Anacapa Island. On the way to the cove, you pass **Arch Rock**, an eroded volcanic formation that is one of the trademarks of the Channel Islands. After docking, you climb 154 stairs to the top of the bluffs, where a system of trails, including a 1½-mile nature path, cuts across the treeless plateau and leads you to dramatic views of rocky coves and extensive kelp beds.

As impressive as those views may be, your best bet at Anacapa is to spend time looking at the island from on (or in) the water. Several companies offer **kayak excursions**, which get you into the island's nooks and crannies where sea-birds and sea lions hang out. **OAARS** offers day-long kayak trips for \$117.50 per person, including lunch and the use of a sit-on-top kayak, life jacket, and helmet (you'll do some spelunking). For more information, call (805) 646-6929. On days with calm conditions, you can **snorkel** at Landing Cove or Frenchy's Cove.

Guided excursions to Santa Cruz Island are less frequent and a bit more rugged. The crossing takes longer, too—2 to 2½ hours. A 2½-mile walk from **Pelican Bay to Prisoners' Harbor** (July 8 and August 5) focuses on island wildlife; a boat picks you up at Prisoners' Harbor. Another guided hike is 6 miles round trip into the island's historic **Central Valley** (July 30 and August 19) to visit a 19th-century ranch and chapel, and Pete's House, an archaeology museum.

*Ventura Harbor is about an hour's drive north of Los Angeles. Island Packers is at 1867 Spinnaker Drive. For recorded information, call (805) 642-7688. The park visitor center is next door. For park information, call 658-5730.*

—Matthew Jaffe



A bristlecone pine at Great Basin. Visitation in 1994—87,255.

## Great Basin National Park

Go to see Nevada's only glacier, one of the country's most spectacular caves, and the oldest trees in the world

Poking its lushly forested shoulders above the scrub and the sage, Great Basin National Park is an island of snow-capped green at the edge of the arid landscape for which it's named.

U.S. 93 cuts through this vastness as you approach the park from the south. The road takes you up one range, then down into a basin, up another range, and then down again. It's like riding a long roller coaster, as you climb out of the warm low-desert land of Las Vegas into the chilly

high-desert Great Basin, that vast sink between the Sierra Nevada and the Wasatch Range out of which no rivers flow. Which is to say the 77,100-acre park is a long haul from nowhere—and fairly high too, since most of it is above 6,500 feet.

#### ◆WHERE TO STAY

To really see the park, you should spend a few nights. Camping in any of the 105 sites is your best bet (\$5 per night, no reservations). The prettiest campground, **Wheeler Peak**, is also the highest, at around 9,900 feet. Or stay in nearby Baker. The **Silverjack Motel** is clean, quiet, and a bargain at \$35 per night. For reservations, call (702) 234-7323.

#### ◆WHAT TO DO

Traveling up **Wheeler Peak Scenic Drive** on the way to the campground is